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ABSTRACT

In response to state licensure standards, Ashland University, Ohio, revised its teacher education program. The faculty pondered how to build in ways that would ensure students were making connections between their courses and field experiences while simultaneously reflecting on their own growth. Portfolios appeared to be the solution. The department's academic standards committee explored the use of portfolios in undergraduate teacher programs and found that they were being used successfully in other teacher education programs. The group worked on a developmental (versus evaluation) model that would encourage reflection, collaboration, and self-evaluation. They determined that the portfolio would be developmental for the first 3 years, and the senior portfolio would draw solely upon senior experiences. The final draft incorporated both a developmental and evaluation portfolio. It paralleled the Pathwise domains and the department's tenets. The first level of the portfolio is general and reflective. The second level is specific to a program. The third level focuses on area of concentration and in the fourth level a student writes a section on his or her philosophy on education along with a personal reflection about themselves and as a future teacher. The program was flexible enough to allow department programs to adapt the structure, implementation, and assessment to their own needs. (SM)

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# Portfolios in Teacher Education

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## Portfolios in Teacher Education

Our goal, as teacher educators, is for our students to become good teachers, but we often wonder if we are giving them the best foundation. Recently, to respond to state licensure standards, Ashland University teacher education faculty studied and revised our teacher education program. One of the questions we pondered was how to build in ways to ensure that students were making connections between their various courses and field experiences and that they were reflecting on their own growth.

Portfolios seemed to be an answer to this question. Our department academic standards committee was asked to explore the idea of using portfolios in our undergraduate teacher education program. We looked at some of the literature on portfolios and found that they were being used successfully in other teacher education programs, often to document student teaching (Borko, Michalec, Timmons, & Siddle,1997). We also found that they could be used to document growth in both a formative (developmental) and summative (evaluation) manner (Cole, 1992). Olson (1991) states that the purpose of the portfolio determines content; we therefore had to consider which use was most important to us.

Kaufman (1993) states that there are four basic assumptions associated with portfolios: The process is important; it should reflect growth; it should encourage reflection and collaboration; and it should include self-evaluation. All of these criteria were important to us as we considered using portfolios. We wanted to students to gain from the process of putting their portfolios together. We hoped the process would encourage students to self-assess, reflecting on their growth and making assumptions about what they had learned and what they needed to learn. We also wanted this experience to be a healthy experience which encouraged students to

communicate with faculty and other mentoring professionals. We hoped that such a process would help them to make connections between theory and practice, as stated by Borko et al. (1997), and would instill patterns of reflective practice. Finally, we agreed with Kaufman (1993) that a portfolio must reflect the goals of our program.

When our committee first began our discussions, several of the committee members were sure it could not be done. How would we store them, who would assess them, how would they be assessed were some of the questions that committee members asked. Our faculty are very busy with their teaching loads and committee work and would not have time to advise a number of students through a portfolio process. We also discussed the benefits and drawbacks of developmental vs evaluation portfolios.

After we discussed why portfolios could not be done, we agreed to consider their implementation but without adding a lot of work to our faculty members. We read articles about portfolios to acquaint ourselves with background information and to agree on definitions of terms. I volunteered to rough out a draft for us to use for discussion. I chose a developmental model because I valued the reflection that it would engender. I also tried, as Kaufman (1993) suggests, to make sure that the portfolio paralleled the goals of our program. In order to prevent a lot of work for a few people, I noted the course in which each addition to the portfolio would be completed. I then gave my draft to a colleague for review. His thoughts were parallel to mine, and, because our students must take the Praxis series of assessment, he added the Praxis domains that each addition paralleled. He also suggested that we combine a developmental and evaluation model. The portfolio would be developmental for the first three years. The senior portfolio would draw on senior experiences, such as student teaching, but students may also use parts from

the developmental portfolio to include in the evaluation portfolio.

We presented this draft to the committee. Surprisingly, everyone accepted our general ideas, and as a committee we further edited the draft. Our department chair reviewed that draft and suggested that we note which of our department tenets each addition paralleled. Our committee approved it, and the final draft was presented to the entire department for approval. The next step is that each program team will modify the guidelines to suit their program and determine evaluation procedures. The modifications and evaluation procedures will then be submitted to our committee for approval.

Our final draft was successful for a number of reasons. One reason is that the process operates within our established structure. We indicated which course or field experience would be responsible to assign and to assess each piece. In most cases the assignment was already part of the course requirements, so little was added to our faculty in terms of load. Another reason for its success is that we incorporated both a developmental and an evaluation portfolio. The developmental begins in the freshman year and continues through the junior year. Its purpose is for the student to document what he or she learned and needed to learn and to provide a picture of growth. The developmental portfolio also provides evidence to the faculty of what the student has learned. The evaluation portfolio takes place during the senior year and is the one which will be assessed. It includes the students' student teaching experience and summarizes their growth throughout their program. Additionally, this portfolio may be used for seeking employment.

Another reason that our proposal was accepted is that we paralleled the Pathwise domains and our own department tenets. This is important for students, faculty members, and future employers to see the professionalism built into our program. Finally, the faculty accepted

the proposal because we allowed the program areas to adapt the structure, implementation, and assessment to their own needs. No one document could have been appropriate for all program areas, and the flexibility allows the faculty to determine what implementation and assessment will match with their requirements.

Often our incoming freshmen do not know if they want to teach. Others know they want to teach but do not know what area they want to teach. Therefore, the first level of the portfolio tends to be general and reflective, allowing the student to think about the field of education and his or her place in it. Beginning at the Sophomore level, the portfolio is specific to a program, adding lesson plans. We have a field experience at teach level, and each level of the portfolio asks the students to reflect on themselves as future teachers. Junior year is even more specifically program-related, adding a developed course, unit, lesson plans based on the unit, and assessment. At this level we also expect our students to be able to teach interdisciplinarily and to work with other teachers. In their portfolio they need to explain how these might happen. Also at this level, the students need to document what they are learning in their concentration areas. In the senior year we ask the students to write a philosophy of education and to reflect on themselves as humans and as future teachers. The specific documentation expected at the junior year continues, but the students are expected to include their student teaching.

Because many states are beginning to require portfolios to document growth of teachers as professionals, we believe it is beneficial for preservice professionals to begin thinking of themselves as developing professionals. We believe the model we have developed helps the preservice teacher to begin this process. We believe that this model also helps the student and the faculty to see evidence of growth in the student and the faculty to critique their programs and

their teaching. Finally, the evaluation portfolio is very useful in seeking employment. Such a model can also be useful when the student is an inservice teacher to document development for licensure, tenure, and renewal.

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# ASHLAND UNIVERSITY
# College of Education
# Portfolio Guide

## Freshman Year

| Portfolio Document | Course | Domain | Tenets |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Personal Essay: Initiating a personal philosophy of education. | Ed. 130 | D | Pre, 8 |
| 2. Case Study: Applying Learning to Teaching | Ed. 202 | A/C | 3 |
| 3. Journal | Ed. 130 | D | Pre,8 |

## Sophomore Year

| Portfolio Document | Course | Domain | Tenets |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Two lesson plans with reflection | Soph Fields | A/C | 3,4,5,6,7 |
| 2. Include in lesson plans techniques to help children with exceptionalities. | Ed. 247 | A/C | 3 |
| 3. Philosophy of Teaching (rough draft) | Soph Fields | D | Pre,8 |
| 4. Journal | Soph Fields | D | Pre,8 |

## Junior Year

| Portfolio Document | Course | Domain | Tenets |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Two lesson plans with reflection | Jr. Fields | A/C | 1,3,4,5,6,7 |
| 2. Examples of developed course, unit and 2 lesson plans, each with specific assessment. One of these should reflect interdisciplinary material and explanation of how student might team with another teacher. | Methods | A/C | 3,4,5,6,7 |
| 3. Concentration area documentation (e.g., photos, videos, diagrams, etc.) | Non-educ. classes | D | 6 |
| 4. Journal | Jr. Fields | D | Pre,8 |

# Senior Year Evaluation Portfolio

| Portfolio Document | Course | Domain | Tenets |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Autobiography of a developing philosophy of education. | Ed. 307/+ | D | Pre,8 |
| 2. Examples of developed course, unit and 2 lesson plans, each with specific assessment. One of these should reflect interdisciplinary material and explanation of how student might team with another teacher. | St. Teach. | A/C | 1,3,4,5, 6,7 |
| 3. Documentation of appropriate learning environment (e.g., photos, videos, diagrams, etc.) | St. Teach. | B | 3 |
| 4. Concentration area documentation | Non-educ. classes | D | 6 |
| 5. Reflection on developmental portfolio:<br>1. how student has grown in the field of education.<br>2. how student has been broadened by social, cultural and diverse experiences.<br>3. how student envisions him/herself as a developing professional. | | D | Pre,8 |

# Preparing Professional Educators

**The Ashland University Education programs are based on foundations of education, current research, effective practice, and dynamic collaborative relationships among educators at all levels. The program is implemented through diverse classroom, field, and clinical experiences. The Ashland University Education faculty believe that a professional educator is a reflective practitioner who merges theory and practice in the following ways:**

1. **Works cooperatively and collaboratively with all members of the educational community**

2. **Communicates clearly and effectively through a variety of means**

3. **Demonstrates understanding of human development, cultural diversity, socio-economic influences and learning differences, thereby enabling all children to learn and contribute**

4. **Employs research in areas such as learning theory and instructional methodology**

5. **Uses a variety of appropriate assessment techniques to enhance learning**

6. **Masters appropriate disciplines so as to engage students in meaningful, active academic study**

7. **Integrates educational technology in teaching and learning process**

8. **Assumes the lifelong responsibility to grow academically, professionally, and personally**